

01608

1965/07/22

Cabinet Room, Thursday, July 11, 1969

Meeting began at 3:00 pm

Present:

/President

/McNamara

/Rusk

/Hall

/Bugsby

/Clifford

/Gen. Wheeler

/Cy Vance

/Moyers

/Valenti

/Bundy

/Cater

/John McCloy ✓

/Arthur Deun ✓

McNamara, Deun, & Carter

PRESIDENT: I don't think that calling up the reserves in itself is a change of policy. There is a question though that we are going into a new kind of activity in VN. Basic objective is to preserve the independence and freedom of VN. This is not necessarily tied in with calling up reserves.

RUSK: The essence of policy is why we are there and what our war aims are. Moving from 75,000 to 185,000 men is a change of policy. Much is to be said for playing this low key.

PRESIDENT: That one point needs to be stressed with Congressional leadership -- also to explain with candor what we are doing to the American people. But when we do, we help the NVN get their requests fulfilled by China and Russia.

MCNAMARA: We can stay away from "change of policy" but it is a change in risk and commitment. We need to explain why it is in our interest to do it.

Services have submitted budget request by \$12 billion. We can cut this down by half or more.

MOYERS: I don't think the press thinks we are going to change basic policy, but in the requirements to meet that policy.

PRESIDENT: That's right and we ought to say it.

BALL: I hope we can avoid a debate on whether it is a change. We always lose on this. We are becoming co-defendant with SVN.

MCCLOY: The country is looking to getting on with the war.

PRESIDENT: There are three alternatives:
1. Sit and lose slowly
2. Get out
3. Put what needs to go in.

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RUSK: If we bring out our message of decision while the Bucharest meeting is going on--it might bring them closer together. What we do in SVN is not of great concern to China. But a progressive step-up in bombing increases risk of China intrusion.

PRESIDENT: But the chiefs say what we are doing in the North is not enough, only pin pricking them, just goosing them.

RUSK: But it is contradictory to do this when we can't find anybody in the South.

Both China and the Soviets have pressure on them. A commitment in SVN is one thing, but a commitment to preserve another socialist state is quite another. This is a distinction we must bear in mind.

We have a 1 in 5 chance of Russia's staying out if we make our commitment and if we bomb Hanoi. A commitment of large forces by us will lead to pressures on us to destroy Hanoi. This is the key point.

MCCLOY: Do you think they will let go if they still have sanctuary?

RUSK: Their only sanctuary is 1/5 of the country.

A. Dean: What do you do if the war drags on--with mounting casualties -- where do we go. The people say if we are not doing what is necessary to end it, why don't we do what is necessary?

MCCLOY: We are begging the questions. If we bomb Haifong, would this end the war? and the answer is "NO." We have only destroyed so far about 20% of the ammunitions capacity and a lesser percentage of barracks capacity.

DEAN: If this carries on for some years, we'll get in the same fix we were in Korea and the Yalu.

RUSK: We were under no pressures to make it a larger war until the war was practically over.

MCCLOY: If we could define our objectives specifically, what are our objectives in a discussion? What do we have to negotiate?

RUSK: 1. Infiltration from the North must stop.
2. We have no interests in a permanent military base there.
3. 1954-1960 agreements ought to be solved by peaceful means and not...

MCCLOY: When do the troops get withdrawn?

RUSK: When proof of infiltration - stopping.

BUNNIV: If we really were the ones for free elections, it would be good. It is difficult for Saigon to sign on.

MCCLOY: Would we be willing to take a Tito government or a VC victory?

BUNNIV: That's where our plan begins to unravel.

Now -- how to keep a reasonable peace offensive going-

PRESIDENT: We have got to keep peace proposals going. It's like a prizefight. Our right is our military power, but our left must be our peace proposals. Every time you move troops forward, you move diplomats forward. I want this done. The generals want more and more- and go farther and farther. But State has to supply me with some, too.

We need Ernie Pyles out there interviewing soldiers who can tell how proud they are to do their duty.

RUSK: Thinking of Bucharest meeting, I suggest you meet with the leadership on Tuesday and make a statement on Wednesday.

BAILEY: We have big problem of disarmament meeting on Tuesday in Geneva.

MCNAMARA: We can't delay this from the public.

PRESIDENT: Congress ought to be briefed on Saturday or Sunday and go up Monday to Congress. We ought to decide what our decision is, write it, brief Ambassadors and then tell the people.

Is the message a personal talk to the Congress or a normal message. Possibly a normal message.

Meeting adjourned at 4:20 pm